

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented) A process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold, comprising making the tire vulcanizing mold out of a plurality of mold elements which have fixed density in the thickness direction of the mold and differ from each other in density to provide a density distribution to the mold, and making at least part of a mold element for a tire tread portion out of a sintered member and a mold element for the mating portions of the mold out of a member having fewer pores than the sintered member or no pores.

2. (previously presented) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 1, wherein part or all of the tire vulcanizing mold is manufactured by a powder sintering method in which sinterable powders are heated and sintered by local heating means to form layers and the density distribution is provided to the sintered body.

3. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 2, wherein the powders are heated and sintered by applying a laser beam and a density distribution is provided to the sintered body by controlling the output of the laser beam.

4. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 2, wherein the powders are heated and sintered by applying a laser beam, and a density distribution is provided to the sintered body by controlling the exposure time of the laser beam.

5. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to any one of claims 2 to 4, wherein the porosity of the sintered body is changed by varying the size of the powders when the powders are heated and sintered.

6. (previously presented) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to any one of claims 2 to 4, wherein the powders are metal or alloy powders.

7. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 6, wherein the powders are aluminum powders.

8. (previously presented) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to any one of claims 2 to 4, wherein the tire vulcanizing mold is a piece type tire mold comprising a plurality of pieces for forming a tread pattern on a side in contact with the tread forming portion of a tire, some or all of the pieces are manufactured by the powder sintering method, and at least one of the pieces is composed of a plurality of mold elements which have fixed density in the thickness direction and differ from each other in density to provide a density distribution to the piece.

9. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 8, wherein the plurality of pieces are integrally manufactured by the powder sintering method, and an air bleeder slit is formed at the boundary between adjacent pieces by weakening or omitting the application of a laser beam to the powders in a predetermined area between the pieces.

10. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 8, wherein the pieces are each manufactured by the powder sintering method, and an air bleeder slit is formed in piece dividing surfaces by weakening or omitting the application of a laser beam to at least some or all of powders in contact with the piece dividing surfaces of the piece.

11. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 1, wherein a mold element arranged around the projection of at least a tire crown portion is

manufactured by the powder sintering method and the mold element composed of this sintered body is assembled with a separately manufactured mold body or piece.

12. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 11, wherein the mold element is set in a mold for casting the mold body or the piece and assembled with the mold body or piece at the time of casting.

13. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 11, wherein the mold element is buried in the separately cast mold body or piece.

14. (previously presented) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to any one of claims 1 to 4 and 11-13, wherein to manufacture at least part or all of the mold or at least some or all of the pieces by the powder sintering method in which sinterable powders are heated and sintered to form layers, a tire 3-D CAD is used to create a model of the tire, lamination models are created by dividing this model with parallel planes having a predetermined angle, and the powders are heated and sintered for each layer based on the lamination models.

15. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 14, wherein the lamination pitch is 0.1 to 0.5 mm.

16. (currently amended) A tire vulcanizing mold comprising a plurality of mold elements which have fixed density in the thickness direction of the mold and differ from each other in density, wherein a mold element for a tire tread portion is composed of a sintered body and a mold element for the mating portions of the mold is composed of a member having one of few substantially no pores or-and no pores.

17. (original) The tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 16, wherein part or all of the tire vulcanizing mold is manufactured by heating and sintering sinterable powders with local heating means to laminate layers.

18. (original) The tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 17, wherein a mold element arranged around the projection of at least a tire crown portion is manufactured by the powder sintering method.

19. (previously presented) The tire vulcanizing mold according to any one of claims 16 to 18, wherein the tire vulcanizing mold is a piece type tire mold comprising a plurality of pieces for forming a tread pattern on a side in contact with the tire tread forming portion of a tire, and at least one of the pieces is composed of a plurality of mold elements which have fixed density in the thickness direction and differ from each other in density.

20. (previously presented) A process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold, comprising the steps of:

manufacturing at least part or all of a mold by a powder sintering method in which sinterable powders are heated and sintered to laminate layers, and

infiltrating a metal or alloy into the pores of the laminated sintered body of the mold and controlling a density of the laminated sintered body by adjusting the infiltration of the metal or alloy.

21. (canceled).

22. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 20 or 21, wherein the powders are metal or alloy powders.

23. (original) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to claim 22, wherein the powders are aluminum powders.

24. (previously presented) The process for manufacturing a tire vulcanizing mold according to any one of claims 20 to 21, wherein the metal or alloy to be infiltrated is copper, aluminum, or copper or aluminum alloy.

Claims 25-29 are canceled.